

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 19, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President:

Thank you for your recent interest in addressing the issue of homelessness in California. The situation is dire and we need coordinated solutions from all levels of government. The death rate for individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County has climbed 76 percent in the past five years, a minimum wage renter working 40 hours a week cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment in a *single* county in this entire country, and the prevalence and severity of natural disasters are intensifying homelessness.

Your repeated proposals to cut public housing, as well as other programs vital to addressing the root causes of homelessness, indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of this complex crisis. As Members of Congress who have worked passionately on this issue in California, we bring to the table an array of proposals that could be pursued immediately if you are serious about taking on this issue.

The day before your recent visit to California, the White House Council of Economic Advisers stated that “policing may be an important tool to help move people off the street and into shelter or housing.” Let us be clear: policing and criminalizing your citizens won’t end homelessness. In fact, providing housing-insecure individuals with supportive housing is significantly less expensive than sending them to jail or an emergency room, as demonstrated by a 2017 RAND Corporation analysis of the Housing for Health program in LA County.

Additionally, research demonstrates that communities where people spend more than 32 percent of their income on rent will likely experience a rapid increase in homelessness. Despite this data, your Administration has proposed increasing rent contribution requirements for assisted tenants and raising minimum rents.

Evidence-based and humane solutions begin with adequate resources, which you repeatedly propose to slash or eliminate. In your FY2020 budget request, you proposed an 18 percent decrease from 2019 funding levels for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and specifically:

- eliminated the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program,
- eliminated the HOME Investment Partnerships grants,
- eliminated the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative,
- eliminated the Public Housing Capital Fund,
- eliminated the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity program,
- reduced the Public Housing Operating Fund by 38 percent, or \$1.79 billion,
- reduced funding for the Housing Choice voucher account by \$34 million (recent research demonstrates that for each additional voucher, permanent supportive housing units increased by 0.9 and the number of homeless veterans decreased by 1),
- reduced funding for the Native American Housing Block Grants by \$155 million,
- reduced funding for Section 202 Housing for the Elderly by \$34 million,
- reduced funding for Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities by \$27 million,
- reduced funding for Housing Counseling assistance by \$10 million, and
- reduced funding for Homeless Assistance grants by \$2.6 billion.

Furthermore, your administration has proposed to triple rents for the lowest-income subsidized residents (which would put nearly 1 million children at risk of homelessness); evict 55,000 children living in mixed-status immigrant families who are U.S. citizens or have eligible immigration status; and make it possible for shelters to refuse to house transgender and LGBTQ people. It is also important to note that the largest source of affordable housing in this country comes from the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC), created by the Reagan administration's 1986 tax law. Your tax bill lowered the corporate income tax and therefore the value of these tax credits.

Taken together, these moves hurt vulnerable seniors, families, veterans, people with disabilities, and low-income renters, ultimately increasing evictions and homelessness and threatening to increase them even more.

We invite you not only to swiftly reverse these proposed policies, but also to collaborate with us on a number of other proposals that can provide immediate relief for Americans struggling with homelessness, like:

- increasing funding for both Housing Choice Voucher and HUD-VASH (Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing) programs and the national Housing Trust Fund through Chairwoman Maxine Waters's *Ending Homelessness Act of 2019* (H.R. 1856), as noted in the Governor's letter, sent to you on September 16,

- authorizing a grant program within the Health Resources and Services Administration for housing programs that offer comprehensive services and intensive case management through the Feinstein-Lieu *Fighting Homelessness Through Services and Housing Act* (S. 923 / H.R. 1978),
- supporting House bills that would: expand and reform the Affordable Housing Tax Credit so that it better serves people with the lowest incomes, launch a Sustainable Communities Initiative, crack down on discriminatory land use policies, and reform the Capital Investment Grants program to incentivize new housing construction near public transit (i.e. Rep. Scott Peters's *Build More Transit Near Housing Act*),
- supporting increased funding of McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance programs, such as the Continuum of Care program,
- working with us to create a shallow subsidy for senior housing as baby boomers age and streamline programs so they complement each other better, and
- working with us to substantially address mental health and substance use disorders, which contribute to and are exacerbated by homelessness.

Mr. President, we all want to solve the homelessness crisis, but this problem did not start overnight. It won't be fixed overnight, and certainly not by attempting to round people up. Right now, advocates and public servants are working on the ground to end homelessness. What they need are the resources, support, and funding that will allow them to holistically advance their work.

We are grateful for your increased interest in this issue, and despite other disagreements or political fights, we look forward to working with you to meaningfully address homelessness in communities across the country.

Sincerely,

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| Katie Hill | Dianne Feinstein | Kamala D. Harris |
| Member of Congress | United States Senator | United States Senator |



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



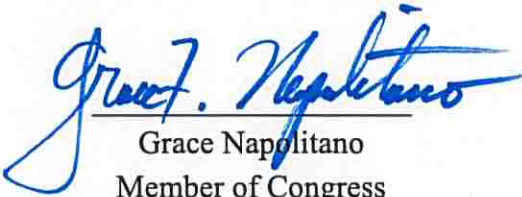
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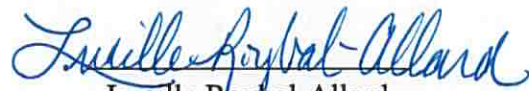
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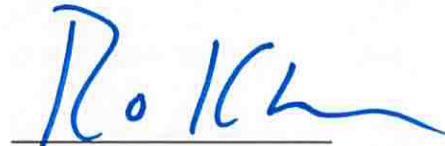
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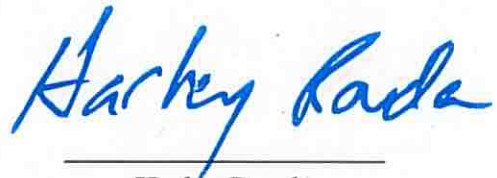
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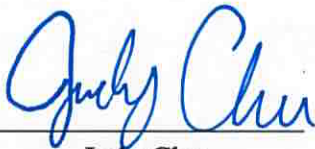
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